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THE EMPLOYMENT OF GIRLS IN TEXTILE INDUSTRIES OF PENNSYLVANIA

Pennsylvania, if classified according to the amount of power used in manufacturing, ranks first among the states of the Union. In the decade 1890 to 1900 the increase in the value of its products was greater than that of any other state. There is an aggregate wealth in its banks of over \$150,000,000, which is over \$500 per capita of the depositors, while in its building and loan associations there is an aggregate assessment of over \$112,000,000. The capital invested in instruments of production and real estate devoted to productive industry amounts to over a billion and a half dollars, and the net value of products of its mills and factories in 1900 was over a billion dollars, or nearly \$175 per capita of population. In the half century from 1850 to 1900, the gross per capita value of the products increased from \$67.07 to \$291.19. All this proves—if proof is needed—that the State of Pennsylvania is rich, and is under no necessity to enlist in its industrial army thousands of young girls whose physical vigor and intellectual power are impaired by continuous and arduous labor.

The labor needed in our factories and workshops to produce articles of social utility, whose net value is over one billion dollars, amounts to over 800,000 hands, of whom 188,578 are females; and of the female employees, 17,286 are girls under 16 years of age. Many of these children are employed in stores as "cash girls," but the vast majority of them are employees in mills and factories, where tiny fingers labor for ten hours each day for 300 days in the year. The industries in which most of them are employed are silk-throwing, hosiery and underwear, cigars and sweet-stuffs, umbrellas and parasols, paper-bags and boxes, overalls and shirts, etc. These industries, in which female child labor forms so important a part of the employees, are not equally distributed over the State. They are found for the greater part in the east. Pennsylvania has 67 counties, but in 18 of them—all of which are east of Harrisburg—which contain 52.87 per cent of the female population of the State, we find 87.07 per cent of all girls employed under 16 years of age.

The six counties in which female child labor most prevails are Berks, Lackawanna, Lancaster, Lehigh, Luzerne and Philadelphia. Most of the children employed in these counties are found in factories and mills located in large cities, such as Reading, Scranton, Lancaster, Allentown, Wilkes-Barre and Philadelphia. Of all the girls under 16 years of age employed in the State, 69.81 per cent are in the above six counties, which contain only 34.98 per cent of the female population of the State.

There are in Pennsylvania 18 cities with over 25,000 population. By a comparison of the returns from the factory inspectors and the returns of the superintendent of public instruction of the State, we are able approximately to determine the percentages of female children employed, of the age-group, 13—16 years, in these cities. The following table gives the percentage:

	Percentage of Girls of age-group 13- 16 years employed.	Percentage of Popu- lation having Foreign Parents.	Percentage of Popula- tion For- eign Born.
In the State.....	9.16	22.7	15.6
Allegheny.....	7.82	37.4	23.2
Allentown.....	41.63	14.1	8.4
Altoona.....	10.17	17.9	8.4
Chester.....	19.28	25.4	14.9
Easton.....	24.46	17.9	8.4
Erie.....	3.80	40.9	22.6
Harrisburg.....	16.09	10.1	4.9
Johnstown.....	1.00	26.7	20.3
Lancaster.....	49.40	18.9	8.4
McKeesport.....	0.59	32.9	27.3
New Castle.....	2.86	22.7	18.8
Philadelphia.....	19.51	32.0	22.8
Pittsburg.....	4.12	37.3	26.3
Reading.....	36.02	12.6	7.5
Scranton.....	32.95	44.3	28.4
Wilkes-Barre.....	26.03	40.0	23.3
Williamsport.....	6.16	19.4	7.7
York.....	31.44	9.2	3.8

York and Easton, together with the cities above mentioned, stand forth conspicuously in this list as centres where young girls are

largely employed. Column second in the above table gives the percentages of the native-born of foreign-born parents, and column third gives those of the foreign-born of the population of these cities. The table shows that cities, such as McKeesport, Johnstown, Erie, Pittsburgh, and Allegheny, which have the highest percentages in the second and third columns, have the lowest percentages of girls under 16 years employed; while the cities in which the highest percentages of this class of employees are found—with the exception of Scranton and Wilkes-Barre—have the lowest percentages of foreign-born or descendants of foreign-born parents. This suggests that entrepreneurs in mills and factories do not wholly draw their supply of child labor from among the children of the foreign-born. Whatever degeneracy is associated with the labor of girls of tender years in factories, it prevails among the children of the native-born as well as among those of foreign-born parents in the State.

Let us now consider three industries of the State, namely, silk-throwing, hosiery and worsted mills. The following table gives us the percentages of female hands employed in them :

	Percentage of female em- ployees.	Percentage of all employees under 16 yrs.	Percentage of all employees under 21 yrs	Percentage of female em- ployees un- der 16 yrs.	Percentage of females among all employees under 21 yrs.
Silk.	70.65	20.20	50.97	22.15	77.49
Hosiery	79.50	18.92	52.19	19.77	83.10
Worsted Mills. . .	57.40	17.83	31.90	23.04	73.75

This table shows that the vast majority of employees in these industries is female, and that of this majority an average of over 22 per cent. is under 16 years of age. Of both male and female employees, nearly 20 per cent. is under 16 years, while an average of nearly 50 per cent. of the hands is composed of minors. These percentages, which show how prevalent female labor is in these industries, are still further corroborated by studying them in distinct localities. Take the three industries, silk-throwing, hosiery and underwear mills in special localities, and the following table gives the percentages of female labor in them :

	Percentage of female employees.	Percentage of all employees under 16 years.	Percentage of all employees under 21 years.	Percentage of all females under 16 years.	Percentage of girls among all employees under 16 years.
SILK					
In Philadelphia .	77.07	6.10	25.08	5.28	66.66
Outside Phil'a. .	77.68	23.90	52.84	25.00	77.69
HOSIERY					
In Philadelphia .	77.09	26.00	56.41	26.82	79.53
Outside Phil'a. .	76.98	24.42	48.73	27.37	86.25
UNDERWEAR					
In Philadelphia .	87.19	7.68	27.72	7.65	62.50
Outside Phil'a. .	84.60	9.15	36.60	7.53	69.65

This table shows that among the silk-workers in Philadelphia we do not find nearly so many minors and young girls under 16 years employed as in this industry outside that city. In the hosiery mills the employment of these classes is as great as in territories outside Philadelphia, while in the underwear factories the employment of minors and young girls is not so prevalent as in the other two industries.

A study of the factories and mills in five of the cities where female labor most prevails gives us the following table as to the percentages of minors employed and the percentages of girls under 16 years employed:

	Percentage of Employees under 21 years.	Percentage of Girls under 16 years employed.
Lancaster	48.24	18.78
Reading	42.26	20.39
Allentown	51.39	23.16
Wilkes-Barre	64.59	22.48
Scranton	55.05	30.87

Let us now consider the wages of these classes of our employees. In the census returns of 1900 we have data given of three industries—

silk, hosiery and worsted goods—whereby we may compute the average annual wage of females. It is as follows:

	Average per Annum.	Average per Working Day.
Women 16 years and over (silk)	\$204.33	68 cents.
Girls under 16 years (silk)	128.95	43 “
Women 16 years and over (hosiery)	265.58	85 “
Girls under 16 years (hosiery)	141.61	47 “
Women 16 years and over (worsted goods) ..	290.61	97 “
Girls under 16 years (worsted goods)	174.54	58 “

In “Industrial Statistics” of our State the daily wage for all employees in silk-throwing, hosiery and worsted yarns is 84 cents, 95 cents and one dollar, respectively, which differ from the figures given by the census of 1900, which are 74 cents, 90 cents and \$1.09, respectively. The average daily wages of children under 16 years employed in silk, hosiery and underwear in the state is 43 cents, 46 cents and 47 cents, respectively. Averages, however, do not give us the true wages paid in factories which are located in cities and towns where an abundant supply of cheap labor is near at hand. In factories located in towns and cities in the anthracite regions, young girls work for ten hours each day, or sixty hours a week, for from \$1.50 to \$2.00 a week. A girl who earns \$3.00 a week is considered fortunate, while forewomen who have charge of from fifty to one hundred girls, get only \$5.00 a week. In factories located in small towns the average daily wage of females over 16 years, as well as that of girls under 16 years, is fully 25 per cent. lower than that of the general averages based on the census returns. Of all industries employing young girls, that of silk-throwing pays the lowest wages, notwithstanding the fact that “of the several branches of the industry the manufacture of silk stood first in the value of products in 1900.” Pennsylvania, according to the last census, ranks second in the industry among the states of the Union.

In the annual report of the factory inspectors for 1902, the chief of inspectors says concerning child labor: “The first year’s report of the Department in 1890 showed that over 10 per cent. of the employees were children between the ages of 12 and 16 years. This year’s report shows that less than 5 per cent. were employed between the age of 13 and 16 years.” In the census of 1890, only 3.87 per cent. of all

employees in the State were children under 16 years, while in 1900 the percentage was 4.51. During the decade, 1890-1900, the increase in the employment of children under 16 years was 47.80 per cent., while the percentage increase of school children in the decade was 15.3. During the same decade the number of female employees increased 44.87 per cent., while the female population of the State increased 19.5 per cent. The returns of the census for 1870, 1880, 1890 and 1900 show that the percentages of children under 16 years employed, as compared with all employees engaged in mechanical and manufacturing pursuits in Pennsylvania, are 6.02, 7.66, 3.87 and 4.51, respectively. The percentage in 1902, as given in the factory inspector's report, is 4.51. With these figures before us it is hard to see how the chief of the factory inspectors could make the above statement. In the last generation the percentage increase of female employees in the State is about three times the percentage increase of our population. Since 1870 many legislatures have attempted to regulate child labor in the State, but the number employed has kept pace with the percentage increase of our population. In 1890 the average wage of children under 16 years was 50.6 cents a day; in 1900 it was 53 cents, an increase of 5.5 per cent. The average wage of females over 16 years in 1890 was 89 cents a day; in 1900 it was 87 cents, a reduction of 2.28 per cent.

The small percentage of children under 16 years employed in Pennsylvania is no guarantee that child labor is less prevalent here than in southern states, to which public attention has been recently called. Our State has many industries in which few children are employed, such as iron and steel, locomotive- and car-building, foundries and electric apparatus, etc. Hence, to give the percentage of children under 16 years employed in all industries of the commonwealth may appear favorable to Pennsylvania (4.51 per cent.), as compared with North Carolina (14.70 per cent.), but the method of comparison is misleading as to the prevalence of child labor in both states. North Carolina has no large industries in which few children are employed. If a just comparison between north and south is made, the nature of the industries in the respective states should be taken into consideration. Rev. E. G. Gardner wrote, in the fall of 1902, that of 45,044 operatives in textile industries in North Carolina, 7,996 (17.7 per cent.) were under 14 years of age and their daily average wage

was 29 cents. In the textile industries specified above in Table 2, there is an average of nearly 22 per cent. of the employees under 16 years of age, whose average net wage, outside Philadelphia, is not 40 cents a day. In North Carolina, 37.8 per cent. of the population is employed in gainful occupations and in Pennsylvania 38.8 per cent.; but in the former State, 64.1 per cent. of these is engaged in agricultural pursuits and 12.7 per cent. in manufacturing and mechanical work, but in Pennsylvania only 14 per cent. of all employees are in the former and 40.1 per cent. in the latter. A just comparison of female and child labor in both states can only be made when we find what percentages of females of the age group 13-23 years, and of children of 13 to 16 years, are employed in each. By this method of comparison we find that 16.3 per cent. of females of the age group 13-23 years is employed in Pennsylvania, and 6.6 per cent. in North Carolina, but the percentage of children under 16 years of age employed in both states is about the same—in Pennsylvania 20.2, and in North Carolina 20.4. While we censure the states of the south for their exploitation of child labor, we should not lose sight of this evil in Pennsylvania because of the specious argument that only 4.51 per cent. of the total employees are children under 16 years of age.

A study of the laws of Pennsylvania relative to child labor reveals a mass of complicated, contradictory and confusing statutes. Legislators, in their anxiety to do something, have disregarded the labor of their predecessors. They pass laws wholly oblivious of the importance of historical continuity and the result is a series of incongruous and disconnected statutes regulating the labor of the wards of the State. But, however bungling the work of the legislators is, the student is hardly prepared to find Pennsylvania more indifferent than Russia to the interests of its children employed in factories. England, since the passage of the Ashley Act in 1833, has prohibited the employment of persons under 18 years at night. Every other European country of any industrial importance has followed England's example. Even Austria and Russia, whence come the Slavs, whose manner of life and customs we so frequently condemn, forbid the labor of young persons at night. But these people coming to Pennsylvania find young girls under 16 years of age employed at night in our mills. Many deem it cruel to employ these

young persons by day for ten hours in stifling mills, but every humane person considers it barbarous to employ them at night. This is a reproach to a State as rich as ours, and although the wrong was amply exposed before the Coal Strike Commission, there were no legislators found in the last legislature chivalrous enough to enthusiastically champion the cause of the coming mothers of our State.

The "Journal" of the American Medical Association, in commenting on "Child Labor in the South," said: "When these immature individuals are kept at constant work for long hours, the outlook for their future can be imagined. It is bad policy for a state to encourage the increase of degeneracy in this way, to say nothing of the questions of humanity involved. Whatever may be thought of some of the other demands of the labor agitation of the day, that of the abolition of child labor, as it exists in some of the southern factories, can be endorsed by our profession, and should be by the public generally." Suppose the medical profession of Pennsylvania, numbering over 10,000 persons, were to direct its attention to the 17,286 girls under 16 years of age employed in our State, would not their professional knowledge of the development of the female organism from the age of 13 to 16 years urge them to co-operate in the attempt to abolish this evil? From the days of Quetelet down to the present, accurate measurements have been taken of the bodily growth of young girls from 13 to 16 years, and the consensus of opinion is, that at no period of their life do they grow so rapidly as then. The female, during these years, develops more rapidly than the male, so that the average girl of 16 years has reached a stage in physical development which boys do not attain until two or three years later. All parents, who duly watch over their children, know that the factory and the mill are not proper places for girls from 13 to 16 years of age.

From the standpoint of economics, this employment of young girls cannot be justified. The more wealth produced the more we have for distribution. The larger the number of persons engaged in gainful occupations the better. But along side these self-evident truths we must place another, namely, that if the health of our industrial life is to be preserved, the various industries of the State must be self-supporting. Those which flourish by the labor of women and children are not self-supporting, for they consume an

amount of energy which they do not replace. They draw upon the capital stock of the nation's vital force and care little or nothing about the degeneracy they effect. When the silk-throwers of England were fighting for a living wage, it was asked: "What is a fair day's wage?" and the reply was: "The due reward for our labor may be summed up in these words: shelter, food and raiment both for ourselves, our wives and our children." Suppose we apply that rule to the textile industries of Pennsylvania. Is 40 cents a day sufficient to give proper food, raiment and shelter to a child of from 13 to 16 years of age? Can a young lady keep herself in food, clothes and room on 85 cents a day? The State spent on its youths in the Huntingdon Reformatory in the year 1901 an average of \$248.90 per capita, or \$4.79 per week—a sum twice as large as that which our young girls earn in our mills and factories. The state has erected a comfortable home for its convicts and spends annually \$199.95 per capita on food, clothing, etc.; this is \$3.84 a week, or \$1.16 less than the average weekly wage of young women over 16 years employed in the mills—a difference that is barely sufficient to cover the item of rent. The textile industries are not self-supporting. We are safe in saying that 50 per cent. of the employees in these industries expend an amount of energy which their wages do not replace. The majority of the women and girls who labor in them cannot provide for their wants with the wages they earn; they must either go short or else the deficiency must be supplied from wages earned in other industries.

But that is not all. The textile industries drain the energy of successive generations of youths, and care nothing whence they come or whither they go. Over 50 per cent. of the employees are minors. When these come to their majority, they pass out of the industry and their place is supplied by successive relays of youths under 16 years. Every boy or girl at the age of 13 has cost somebody from \$500 to \$600; however the textile industries have not paid the bill. Young men are constantly forced out of these industries when they demand wages that will enable them to establish a home and raise a family, and young women soon reach the maximum wage and, no matter how long they remain in the factory, they have no hope of better wages. Young men who leave the industry face the world at a great disadvantage, and, when their industrial capacity diminishes

and ailments come upon them which finally end in death, the industries in which they spent their youth bear no part of the burdens which fall upon the community. If these industries existed in a State where the institution of slavery prevailed, they would be obliged to raise boys and girls for the mills, and they would also be compelled to provide for them when ailments, old age and death came upon them. But here in Pennsylvania, the textile industries flourish by absorbing a supply of energy that has cost them nothing. The children and youths are drained of their strength for a decade, then pushed out into the cold world. These industries hold the same advantageous position as compared with the self-supporting industries, that they would if they received a bounty or subsidy from the government. They flourish by freely drawing upon the capital stock of the nation and, being under no social pressure to maintain a rate of wages that will keep their employees day by day in unimpaired health and vigor, they wholly lose sight of the larger obligation to maintain each generation unimpaired in quantity and quality.

Society may ask for cheap products from the textile industries, but goods that have in them the flesh and blood of the future mothers of the toiling masses are not cheap. The price paid is degeneracy. Insufficient wages mean insufficient food, liability to diseases, industrial inefficiency, scanty clothing, cramped dwellings and a vitiated atmosphere. These women and young girls, who, under financial pressure, yield the strength so much needed in the building up of their frames, pay the penalty in headaches, toothaches, dyspepsia and sores, dragging pains and chronic anæmia. Do the medical profession find among these young mill hands that state of health which is normal among the young daughters of the professional classes? Communities where textile industries flourish are the scenes of degeneracy, and upon each generation rests a curse. The individuals who are exploited depart farther and farther from the higher type of womanhood which American civilization has held before the world.

The social interest of our State demands that the textile industries be made self-supporting. It cannot be done by collective bargain, for the youths, under existing conditions, cannot be organized so efficiently as to effect this. The better way is to check the

excessive use of child-labor by raising the age at which boys and girls can be employed. The International Socialist and Trade Union Congress in 1896 demanded that the age of boys and girls beginning to work should be raised to 16 years. This certainly should be done in the case of our young girls, and the medical profession, because of its greater knowledge of the physical organism, should advocate such legislation. Pennsylvania, whose productive wealth annually amounts to over two billions of dollars, should rise to the degree of intelligence which regards the boys and girls, not as independent wealth-producers who earn their wages from day to day, but as the future citizens and parents of our commonwealth, for whom, up to their majority, proper conditions of growth and education should be secured. The well-being of society demands that all conditions of employment inconsistent with the maintenance of the employees in a state of efficiency as producers should be eliminated. Nothing imperils this imperative of modern civilization so much as permitting young girls to be employed for bare subsistence at an age when nature taxes their system to the limit of profitable endurance. Such a custom works deterioration both in the physical and intellectual spheres, and hinders the continuous existence, generation after generation, of healthy and efficient descendants.

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